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## HARIDĀSA DĀSA BĀBĀJĪ: A LITERARY LIFE OF SERVICE

Abhishek Bose, Sumanta Rudra and Aishwarya Bhattacharyya

*yasya sarvē samārambhāḥ kāmasaṅkalpavarjitāḥ  
jñānāgnidagdhakarmāṇaṁ tamāhuḥ paṇḍitaṁ budhāḥ*

“He whose undertakings are free from the will of desire, whose works are burned up in the fire of wisdom, such a person the wise call a man of learning.”<sup>1</sup>  
(*Bhagavadgītā*, 4.19)

The following essay focuses on Haridāsa Dāsa Bābājī, a Vaiṣṇava renunciate and a great scholar who wrote, translated, edited, recovered and published a good number of important books, and who, moreover, singlehandedly compiled a colossal encyclopaedia with a specific focus on the Śrī Caitanya sampradāya. Despite the magnitude and scholastic acumen and overall value of his works, Haridāsa Dāsa and most of his books remain relatively unknown, only within the purview of a small group of scholars. This is largely due to the humility and unassuming personality of this Bābājī<sup>2</sup> Vaiṣṇava, as if reminding us of the śloka quoted above from the *Bhagavadgītā* that says that a true man of learning is “free from the will of desire” and that his “works are burned up in the fire of wisdom.” This article may be seen as an homage to this great soul, an effort to summarize the salient points in his life, which was a significant mission in itself. Needless to say, this short piece will not be extensive nor exhaustive, but rather an introduction to his life and work.

### *Life-Sketch*

Haridāsa Dāsa was born in 1898 A.D. in Madhugrām in the Noākhālī district of then undivided Bengal, present Bangladesh.<sup>3</sup> The name of his *pūrvāśrama*<sup>4</sup> was Harendrakumāra Cakravartī. His father was Gaganacandra Tarkaratna, a famous scholar. Harendrakumāra had a younger brother named Manindrakumār, who

left home at a very early age; later on he would also become a Bābājī and live at Haribola Kutīra along with his elder brother.

Harendrakumāra (the future Haridāsa) was a meritorious student from childhood, completing his studies at (an English) Middle school in his home village and earning a *ṛtti* or scholarship. In 1919 he passed a matriculation examination and was admitted to Comilla College. The family did not have the economic means to support this, so Harendrakumāra took residence in the house of Bipinbihārī Chat-topadhyaya at Kumilla in ex-change for his tutoring the children of his benefactor's house. Bipinbihārī was a staunch Vaiṣṇava and used to do *kīrtana* every evening together with other devotees. One of these devotees, Girīndranātha Ghoṣa, would later renounce the material world and become a lasting influence in the life of Harendrakumāra.

With this as a backdrop, Harendrakumāra developed an attraction for *Harināma kīrtana* from a very young age. When Bipinbihārī was transferred from Kumillā, Harendrakumāra also moved to a village named Mākaḍadaha in the suburbs of Kolkata. From there every day he would walk miles to attend his classes at the Ripon College. He eventually secured the first class third position in B.A. Sanskrit Honors in 1923 and was admitted to the M.A. program at the University of Calcutta.

During his university days, Harendrakumāra became spiritually charged and began visiting the Haribola Kuṭīra at Navadvīpa frequently. While there, he would go door to door singing *kīrtana* and asking for *mādhukarī*<sup>5</sup> with Girīdhārī Dāsa Bābājī (the name of Girīndranātha Ghoṣa after renunciation).

However, in addition to his pronounced spiritual leaning, as a university student, Harendrakumāra was known and admired by his peers and teachers for his sheer academic excellence—he secured a prestigious first position along with an M.A. in Sanskrit from the University of Calcutta; quite an achievement if one remembers that in those days University of Calcutta used to work as the umbrella institution for hundreds of colleges throughout the length and breadth of the country, even abroad.

Despite his brilliant academic record, Harendrakumāra was not inclined to pursue scholarship as a career to earn fame and fortune. Instead, he chose a path of extreme sacrifice, humility, and selfless devotion. Nonetheless, his scholarly disposition remained; even his service on the path of *bhakti* would involve “knowledge” and “learning” as a pathway to Gaura and Govinda. But that would take place later in life.

Just before his M.A. examinations were due, Harendrakumāra received *dīkṣa* or initiation from Harimohana Śīromaṇi, who was in the *paramparā* or line of succes-

sion in the Gadādhara family. Harimohana Śiromaṇi was an illustrious Vaiṣṇava figure in his day and was a direct descendant of Kāṣṭhakātā Jagannātha, who was initiated by Gadādhara Paṇḍita himself and was an associate of Mahāprabhu. In this way, Harendrakumāra became a part of the Gaura-Gadādhara lineage. Thus, his spiritual pursuit became his foremost interest. However, getting initiated just before the examinations did not deter him from securing the first class M.A. position in 1925 and being awarded a gold medal by the University of Calcutta for it. What he did next was very interesting; he actually sold that gold medal to acquire land for his Guru's āśrama, the Haribola Kuṭīra at Navadvīpa.<sup>6</sup>

After his initiation he became so full of devotion that he went to Vṛndāvana *dhāma*<sup>7</sup> and started living a life of intense *vairāgya*.<sup>8</sup> At Rādhā Kuṇḍa he lived solely upon *mādhukarī* and his everyday service was cleaning and sweeping her sacred banks.<sup>9</sup> During this time he received the news that his guru Harimohana was ill and returned to look after him. When Harimohana's condition was a little better, Harendrakumāra taught for some days at a school in Kumillā until he could earn the amount necessary to pay off some financial debts incurred by his guru. But Harimohana soon passed away, and Harendrakumāra left teaching and went to Navadvīpa—and at this time he began living at the Haribol Kuṭīra. Then, in 1933, he adopted the life of a renunciate, taking *veśa*<sup>10</sup> with Giridhārī Bābājī, who became his *veśa-guru*. At that time Harendrakumāra received the name “Haridāsa Dāsa.”

After *veśa-āśraya*, he went to Purī *dhāma* and engaged himself in *sevā*<sup>11</sup> at the *maṭha* of Haridāsa Ṭhākura. After staying for a while at Purī, Haridāsa went to Vṛndāvana following the instruction of Giridhārī Bābājī. It is there at Govinda Kuṇḍa where Haridāsa received the mercy of *Siddha Mahātmā* Śrī Manohara Dāsa Bābājī and was assigned *grantha-sevā*, that is to say, loving service involving books.

Manohara Dāsa Bābājī specifically instructed and inspired him to find, translate, and publish the books integral to the *sampradāya* and prophesized that Haridāsajī shall attain *siddhi*<sup>12</sup> through this *grantha-sevā*. Besides the motivation given by Manohara Dāsa Bābājī, the only true inspiration behind his life-long book-service came from his Kṛṣṇa-bhakti, which was boundless. In this unwavering worship, his service to the Lord became synonymous with publishing the rare *bhakti-granthas*. Further, Haridāsajī lived and funded his research and publication solely by *mādhukarī*, and spent seventeen hours a day in his studies. He once remarked:

I do not live by bread but by my service to the great works composed by the great associates of lords Nityānanda and Gaurāṅga—by discovering and translating them, by writing commentaries on them, and by printing them—so that they are made available to the devotees. They are my *iṣṭa*, the objects of my exclusive devotion. Without service to them I cannot even live.<sup>13</sup>

His exemplary life was an ideal example of how he truly lived *because* of the books that meant so much to him, which to him were embodiments of Gaura-Nitāi, and of the other great souls in Vaiṣṇava history. Haridāsajī used to live plainly in a little room with earthen floor and a *bhājana*-cave underneath; he had just one earthen water pot that he used for multifarious purposes; all his reading and writing were conducted under the light of a kerosene lamp; he preferred not to avail himself of an electric light even when it was available.

Earlier in life, before he was assigned the *grantha-sevā*, at dawn he used to roam three-quarters of a mile on the streets of Navadvīpa doing *kīrtana* every morning with a pair of simple cymbals. He eventually had to abandon that practice, however, when his time became more fully dedicated to reading and writing. Nonetheless, he still began each day by performing some private *kīrtana* at dawn. He lived like this in the Haribol Kuṭīra for thirty years by meager means of subsistence and believed that his service towards the *bhakti-granthas* was the sole purpose of his life.

He sought no help or monetary assistance from anyone for his endeavors. In his thirty years of service in research, Haridāsajī personally travelled through the length and breadth of Bengal, went door to door, visiting scholars and publishers; he went to the *maṭhas* and libraries in search of rare books and manuscripts, precious assets that were forgotten, unknown, or on the verge of extinction. In such a relentless pursuit, he neglected food or shelter, depending on God for sustenance.

The only objective that drove Haridāsa from place to place was recovering the lost gems and glorious history encapsulated in Vaiṣṇava literature and culture. He went through great lengths to decode the most rare and obscure manuscripts, both ancient and modern, and his intellectual faculty and scholastic bent of mind prompted him to further analyze those very texts, translate them into Bengali, annotate and make commentaries, and finally, with great effort, publish them. For some of the older texts, he even engaged time-tested preservation methods to see to their survival, and even personally saw to their typesetting, proofreading, and making the manuscripts fully ready for print.

As a Vaiṣṇava scholar, Haridāsa exemplified a curious mixture of humility and firm resolve; this can be easily understood when considering the chain of events leading up to the publication of the *Abhidhāna: Śrī Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī* (1874–1937), founder of the Gaudiya Math, felt the need to establish a thorough reference work for the Vaiṣṇava world, an encyclopedia, of sorts, and to this end, he published four Bengali volumes entitled the *Vaiṣṇava Mañjuṣā Samāhṛti* (1921).

After Bhaktisiddhānta's passing, Purīdāsa Dāsa, one of his prominent disciples, invited Haridāsa to complete the work already initiated, augmenting the encyclopedia of Śrī Bhaktisiddhānta. Haridāsa graciously accepted that invitation, and

began his research while taking residence at the Baghbazar Gaudiya Mission. In due course, he completed the task he was entrusted with. When he suggested a change in its title to make it appeal to a wider audience, authorities at the Gaudiya Mission accepted his idea favorably, and they all worked well together.

However, it was a tumultuous period for the Gaudiya Mission itself, chiefly because of the founder's passing and the legal battles that engulfed his institution. Moreover, when the manuscript was completed, Purīdāsajī, then head of the Gaudiya Mission, was overwhelmed with printing authoritative editions of the Gosvāmī literature and was thus unable to help publish the *Abhidhāna*.

After waiting for some years, Haridāsa went back to Baghbazar and asked for his manuscript so that he could publish it on his own. His request was granted and he soon took it upon his own shoulders to ready the mammoth volumes for publication; although he did not have the necessary institutional or financial support at that point, he was determined to make the work available in printed form.

That was his resolve: he would publish the *Abhidhāna* by any means necessary. Both his determination and his humility can be seen from the following introductory words to the first volume of the *Abhidhāna*, and although Haridāsa does not mention all the details regarding its publication, he assures his readers that the entire endeavor took time due to "divine tribulations." Eventually, the entire work was published, with the final volume appearing soon after its author's departure. Here are Haridāsa's own words:

Śrī Śrī Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava Abhidhāna is being presented to the *sahṛdaya*, surpassing many obstacles and difficulties through the inspiration and auspicious desire of Śrī Śrī Guru and Gaurāṅga, who are oceans of mercy. While researching Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava texts, especially while writing the *Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava Sāhitya*, the need for such an encyclopaedia had arisen in the heart of this poor and fallen soul. Still, I could not make it manifest due to a dearth of necessary material. As this servant of the Vaiṣṇavas did not have any people or financial support, in 1945, I took shelter of the Baghbazar Gaudiya Matha in order to materialize this wish. After strenuous endeavor for three to four years, the primary draft of the book was completed, but it could not be published because of certain divine tribulations. Finally, after two years, divine grace returned the draft manuscript of the book into the soiled hands of this fallen soul. For the next three years, through continuous hard work, the manuscript was edited and expanded, especially in accordance with the many instructions of the Ministry of Education, Govt. of West Bengal. Though the manuscript thus became publishable, due to further financial constraints, it could not be published at that time. However, with infinite grace from Gurudeva, at least the first volume of the book is now being published.<sup>14</sup>

List of the books published by Haridāsa Dāsa

Sl. No.	Name of the book	Author
1.	<i>Āścaryarāsapravandhaḥ</i>	Prabodhānanda Sarasvatī
2.	<i>Śrīśrīrṅgādāvanamahimāmṛtam</i>	Prabodhānanda Sarasvatī
3.	<i>Śrīnikuṇḥjakevivirudāvalī</i>	Viśvanātha Cakravartī
4.	<i>Śrīśrīrādhākṛṣṇārcanādīpikā</i>	Jīva Gosvāmī
5.	<i>Śrīśrīkṛṣṇāṅhikakaumudī</i>	Kavi Karṇapūra Gosvāmī
6.	<i>Siddhānta-darpanaḥ</i>	Valadeva Vidyābhūṣaṇa
7.	<i>Aiśvarya-kādamvini</i>	Valadeva Vidyābhūṣaṇa
8.	<i>Śrīśrīvaiṣṇavānandini</i>	Valadeva Vidyābhūṣaṇa
9.	<i>Śrīśrīgītacandrodaya</i>	Ghanaśyāma Cakravartī
10.	<i>Śrīśrīnāmāmṛtasamudra</i>	Narahari Cakravartī
11.	<i>Śrīśrīrūjyālanīlamanīḥ</i>	Rūpa Gosvāmī
12.	<i>Śrīśrībhaktirasāmṛtasindhuh</i>	Rūpa Gosvāmī
13.	<i>Śrīśrīmādhavamahotsavam</i>	Jīva Gosvāmī
14.	<i>Sāmānyavirudāvalīlakṣaṇam tathā gopālavirudāvalī</i>	Jīva Gosvāmī
15.	<i>Śrīyogasārastotram</i>	Jīva Gosvāmī
16.	<i>Śrīśrīgauḍīya Vaiṣṇava Sāhitya</i>	Haridāsa Dāsa
17.	<i>Śrīśrīgauḍīya Vaiṣṇava Tīrtha ba Śrīpāṭa Vivaraṇī</i>	Haridāsa Dāsa
18.	<i>Āryāśatakam</i>	Kavi Karṇapūra
19.	<i>Chandaḥ kaustabhaḥ</i>	Rādhādāmodara
20.	<i>Kāvya-kaustabham</i>	
21.	<i>Dhātu saṁgrahaḥ</i>	Jīva Gosvāmī
22.	<i>Śīghrabodha Vyakaraṇam</i>	Ānandina Bhāgavatottamena
23.	<i>Śrīśrīgauḍīya Vaiṣṇava Jīvana (1<sup>st</sup> Volume)</i>	Haridāsa Dāsa
24.	<i>Śrīśrīśyāmānanda śatakam</i>	Rasikānanda Prabhu
25.	<i>Śrīśrībhaktirasāmṛtaśeṣaḥ</i>	Jīva Gosvāmī
26.	<i>Śrīśrībhāvanāsārasaṁgrahaḥ</i>	Siddha Kṛṣṇadāsa Bābājī (Compiled)
27.	<i>Śrīharibhakti Tattvasāra Saṁgrahaḥ</i>	Puruṣottama Śarmaṇa (Compiled)
28.	<i>Śrīdānakelīcintāmaṇi</i>	Raghunātha Dāsa



29.	<i>Camatkāracandrikā</i>	Viśvanātha Cakravartī
30.	<i>Śrīsuratakathāmṛtam</i>	Viśvanātha Cakravartī
31.	<i>Śrīvirudāvalīlakṣaṇam</i>	Rūpa Gosvāmī
32.	<i>Śrīkṛṣṇābhīṣekaḥ</i>	Rūpa Gosvāmī
33.	<i>Śrīgopālatāpanīṭikā</i>	
34.	<i>Śrīgaurāṅgavirudāvalī</i>	Raghunandana Gosvāmī
35.	<i>Śrīśrīkṛṣṇalīlāstavaḥ</i>	Sanātana Gosvāmī
36.	<i>Śrīśrīmathurāmāhāmyam</i>	Rūpa Gosvāmī
37.	<i>Paratattvagaurah</i>	
38.	<i>Dāśaślokiḥhāsyam</i>	Rādhākṛṣṇa Gosvāmī
39.	<i>Śrīgovindaratimāñjarī</i>	Ghanaśyāma Dāsa
40.	<i>Durlabhasāra</i>	Locana Dāsa Ṭhākura
41.	<i>Muktācaritrera Payārānuvāda</i>	Nārāyaṇa Dāsa
42.	<i>Sādhanaḍipikā</i>	Rādhākṛṣṇa Dāsa Gosvāmī
43.	<i>Nandīśvaracandrikā</i>	Siddha Kṛṣṇadāsa Bābā (3rd)
44.	<i>Śrīgauracaritacintāmaṇi</i>	Narahari Cakravartī
45.	<i>Śrīkṛṣṇavirudāvalī</i>	Kṛṣṇaśaraṇa
46.	<i>Śrīkṛṣṇabhaktiratnaprakāśaḥ</i>	Rāghava Gosvāmī
47.	<i>Sanḡitamādhavam</i>	Prabodhānanda Sarasvatī
48.	<i>Murāri Guptera kaḍcā</i>	Murāri Gupta
49.	<i>Brahmasamhitā</i>	
50.	<i>Śrīśrīgovindalīlāmṛtam</i>	Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja Gosvāmī
51.	<i>Paddhatitrayam</i>	Gopālaguru Gosvāmī, Dhyānacandra Gosvāmī, Siddha Kṛṣṇadāsa Bābāji (Prathama)
52.	<i>Preyobhaktirasārṇava</i>	Nayanānanda Ṭhākura
53.	<i>Śrīśyāmacandrodaya</i>	Kavi Jagadānanda
54.	<i>Śrīkṛṣṇabhaktirasakadamva</i>	Nayanānanda Ṭhākura
55.	<i>Śrīgovindavallabha nāṭaka</i>	Dvārakānātha Ṭhākura
56.	<i>Rasakalikā</i>	Nandakiśora Gosvāmī
57.	<i>Vṛhadbhāgavatāmṛtakanā</i>	Kānāi Dāsa
58.	<i>Śrīcaitanyamatamañjuṣā</i>	Śrīnātha Cakravartī
59.	<i>Prayuktākhyātamañjarī</i>	Rūpa Gosvāmī
60.	<i>Gītagovindam</i>	Jayadeva
61.	<i>Śrīśrīśrīnivāsācārya granthamālā</i>	Haridāsa Dāsa
62.	<i>Śrīśrīgauḍīya vaiṣṇava abhidhāna (1st volume)</i>	Haridāsa Dāsa
63.	<i>Śrīśrīgauḍīya vaiṣṇava abhidhāna (2nd, 3rd, 4th volume)</i>	Haridāsa Dāsa
64.	<i>Śrīkṛṣṇacaitanyacaritāmṛta</i>	Murāri Gupta
65.	<i>Śrīśrīgauḍīya Vaiṣṇava Jīvana (2<sup>nd</sup> Volume)</i>	Haridāsa Dāsa

\*Compiled by Sayani Hazra and Pijush Kanti Dua, Research Fellows, The Vaishnava Encyclopaedia Project, BRC, Kolkata.

### Works

The preceding two-page chart will give an idea of the magnitude and the extent of his many publications. As has been mentioned earlier, Haridāsa located, wrote, compiled, edited, translated, made commentaries, and published some sixty-five books, many of which were hitherto unknown in the Vaiṣṇava world.

Please note that this chart shows Haridāsa in his role as compiler and publisher, but does not actually reflect the other responsibilities borne by him in bringing these texts into the light of day. Many of the above were actually discovered, edited, and translated by him; others were entirely original works, with him as the author. For example, he discovered the manuscripts of *Mādhava-mahotsava* by Jīva Gosvāmī and the *Artharasāḷaka-ṭikā* of *Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu* written by Mukunda Dāsa. There is hearsay that Haridāsa received the *Kṛṣṇa Līlā Stava* by Sanātana Gosvāmī through divine grace from the waters of Yamunā. He also discovered the *ṭikā* written by Rūpa Gosvāmī on his own *Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu*; this is called the *Artharatnāḷpa-dīpikā* and was found at the library of the king of Jaipur. It has remained unpublished until Haridāsa published it.

Among his sixty-five published books, six were completely his original works, namely, *Paratattva-Gaura*, *Gauḍīya-aiṣṇava-sāhitya*, *Gauḍīya-aiṣṇava-tīrtha*, the first and second volumes of the *Gauḍīya-aiṣṇava-jīvana*, *Madhyayugīya Gauḍīya sāhityera bhaugalika O aitiḥāsika abhidhāna* and the *Gauḍīya-aiṣṇava-abhidhāna*. Many of his works filled a literary void in the history of the *sampradāya*. For example, *Prema-bhakti-rasāṇava*, *Kṛṣṇa-bhakti-rasa-kadamva* and *Śyāma-candrodaya*, published by Haridāsa, are important reference books for the study of Nityānanda Prabhu and his influence. The *Sādhana-dīpikā* written by Rādhākṛṣṇa Gosvāmī from Gadādhara Paṇḍita's branch of the *sampradāya*, and the *Kṛṣṇāhṇika-kaumudī* written by Kavi Karpūra, are examples of historically significant books edited by Dāsa.

It is clearly apparent in the works of Haridāsajī that he, in spite of his deep spiritual practice and tendency to avoid the material layers of worldly life, was well aware of modern discourse in terms of scientific research and philosophical enquiry. In fact, he always managed to find an appreciable balance between traditional religious belief systems and scientific knowledge, as is evident in his research. His work delved deeply into the fields of literature, linguistics, philosophy, history, geography, music, biography, and many other disciplines.<sup>15</sup> Although the primary focus of his work was Vaishnavism and Bengal, he looked toward nuances that encompassed almost the whole of India, in terms of its various cultures, religious sects, streams of knowledge, scriptures, literature, and the other arts. It would not be possible to thoroughly discuss all his work here, so,

instead, we will here provide a brief overview of just two of his projects based on original research.

**Śrīpāṭa-paryatana:** There was not much awareness about the geographical expanse of the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava *sampradāya* in medieval India due to the dearth of information and books in this field. There were few regional descriptions of the *śrīpāṭa*<sup>16</sup> in terms of pertinent literature. In order to fulfill that need, Haridāsajī wrote a “Historical Geography” of the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava *sampradāya*.<sup>17</sup> He located many unknown Vaiṣṇava *śrīpāṭa*-s in the rural areas of Bengal and offered descriptions about them as well as about various renowned *tīrthas* and lesser-known *āśramas* elsewhere in India. According to one expert, “the *śrīpāṭa-paryatana* of Haridāsajī can be viewed as an indispensable source text in order to draw a complete and authentic picture of the socio-cultural history of Bengal.”<sup>18</sup> Another expert’s view: “His description includes the geographical picture of rural Bengal from Śrīhaṭṭa to Vīrabhūmā, from Maimansīrha to Jharkhand, from Yaśohara-Khulnā to Bñākuḍā.”<sup>19</sup>

In many cases, Haridāsa had to depend on previous books on *śrīpāṭa*, but he nonetheless went himself to those different villages and searched for those lost/forgotten *śrīpāṭas* as well, trying to authenticate and corroborate the existing information about them; in other words, he collected all available information about these sacred places, and he also verified this material with the help of archival and field research. The sum-total of these efforts is this book, containing all the material in one place, up to the detail of travel advisories.

**Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava Abhidhāna:** This is the most voluminous and possibly most popular of all his works—compiled, edited, and published singlehandedly by Haridāsajī. It was obviously his *magnum opus*, owing to its all-encompassing informative content in the field of Gaudiya Vaishnavism and sheer length. The *abhidhāna* has sections on literature, philosophy, personalities, places, insignia, terms and so on. Haridāsajī had singlehandedly mapped fields of literature, archaeology, geography, history, philosophy and what not. The structure of organisation of the different volumes of the *abhidhāna* is given below:

### Volume I

*Samśkrta-prāya śabdāvalī* – This is a glossary of over 900 pages of Sanskrit, *tatsama* and *tadbhava* words, technical, critical and philosophical terms found in both published and unpublished Vaiṣṇava works. It contains the meanings, etymology, significance and instances of their usage.

**Volume II**

*Padāvalīra bhāṣā* - This is again a glossary; including Brajbhasha, Bangla, Hindi, Maithili, Odia words and terms found in the *padāvalī* literature from the time of Vidyāpatī and Caṇḍīdāsa up until Narahari Cakravartī. Besides explaining the meanings of each word, the author has also mentioned the abbreviated names of the source books from which the particular word has been taken.

There are two appendices to this part –

Appendix A: Language, metre, *alanīkāra*, *rasa* of *Padāvalī*; the *rasa*, styles, music, musical instruments of *Kīrtana*; *Kīrtana* of 64 *rasa*.

Appendix B: Glossary of musical terminology beginning from Bharata up to Narahari Cakravartī.

**Volume III**

*Caritāvalī* – This consists of biographical entries on the associates of Mahāprabhu and other important figures in the *sampradāya*. It is exhaustive, all the *Padakartā*, important Vaiṣṇava figures, authors that came into the *sampradāya* right up to contemporary times (as of Haridāsajī's writing) can be found here. However, this section also includes entries on other important personalities in the Indian tradition: Śaṅkarācārya, Rāmānuja, Nimbārka—entries on all the predecessors that serve to contextualize Mahāprabhu and his *sampradāya*. The entries here summarize biographical details, compositions/contributions by them, and the mentioning of them in all available resources.

Appendix A – Gods and Goddesses important to the canon.

Appendix B – *Granthāvalī*: A bibliography for the Gauḍīya canon including brief contents of each book. The list somewhat exhaustive; at the center, of course, is Mahāprabhu and the Gosvāmīs but the axis stretches from the *Vedas* down to 20<sup>th</sup> century works that are linked to the *sampradāya*. Besides Sanskrit and Bangla, it also surveys many other Indian languages like Odia, Hindi, etc., and also various English sources.

**Volume IV**

*Tīrthāvalī*– Holy places specifically connected to Mahāprabhu and his associates; places in connection with Kṛṣṇa; and any places known to be connected with the Vaiṣṇava *sampradāya*. Also some information on festivals.

Appendix A – Some glossary on Sanskrit and Bengali words

Appendix B – *Dhātu-rūpa* or verbal roots

Appendix C – Words not included elsewhere in the *Abhidhāna*.

As can be understood from the given structure, the *Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava Abhidhāna* is a compendium of knowledge that follows the structure of the modern encyclopaedia. Genres like *abhidhāna* and *koṣa*<sup>20</sup> already existed in the Indian tradition,

and were comparable to the encyclopaedia. In fact, the late 19th and 20th centuries witnessed the publication of many *abhidhāna*, *koṣa* or encyclopaedias in English and in languages like Bangla, Hindi, etc.<sup>21</sup> In case of colonial Bengal, beginning from the latter part of the 19th century, such efforts can be seen as part of a sort of reclamation process undertaken by colonial subjects. Caitanya Mahāprabhu and his Vaiṣṇava *sampradāya* were intrinsic to that search because they have caused a paradigmatic shift in the history of Bengal. In the backdrop of these nationalist explorations, though fraught with certain disdain at times, Vaiṣṇava books were also being published and many old manuscripts were being recovered and restored. Haridāsa Dāsa, it seems, represents the culmination of these efforts of reclamation, reframing indigenous knowledge in the format of an encyclopaedia. Though it is named *abhidhāna*, which is often used as the synonym for dictionary, Haridāsa in his introduction himself talks about the concept of encyclopaedia, shedding light on the terminology itself. Haridāsa Dāsa Bābājī, in his humble manner, was working upon his *Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava Abhidhāna* to create an entire oeuvre for Vaiṣṇavas, and, in the process, somehow strengthening the claim for a concrete Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava identity.

However, he did not restrict it to Caitanya Vaiṣṇavism. Although termed as “Gauḍīya,” the *Abhidhāna* touches upon many aspects of the other Vaiṣṇava schools as well—it includes the Vaiṣṇava saint-poets of northern India and beyond, and even details about medieval Indian culture in general. The *Abhidhāna* is comprehensive in this respect, presenting its readers with every piece of available information accessed from rare books and other sources, making it a profound repository of diverse kinds of information.

In summation, Haridāsājī performed the Herculean task of a massive chronicler while building a body of information that defies description. In his work, he tries to present objective truth as far as possible, free from any biases or partisan perspectives. While referring to an event or phenomenon, Haridāsājī always takes it upon himself to present all available versions and alternative interpretations, to give the reader a thorough perspective on all pertinent subjects. In a similar fashion, he contextualized numerous Vaiṣṇava personalities and events, so that his readers could grasp the totality of an idea and thus understand a greater historical picture.

### *Conclusion*

Throughout his life, Haridāsājī avoided public attention as far as possible. This spoke volumes about him as a person: Haridāsājī was a wonderful Vaiṣṇava; he

was an extraordinary combination of linguist, litterateur, philosopher, a great connoisseur of music, and, at the same time, displayed an unthinkable perseverance, humility true to a devotional lifestyle, a heart full of *bhakti*, and a life of worship and immense sacrifice. Professor Sunitikumāra Chaṭṭopādhyāya, who was among the foremost scholars in India at the time, said that he feels a sense of pride because he had taught Haridāsajī at Calcutta University. Speaking about his *Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava Abhidhāna*, Chaṭṭopādhyāya has said, “The name of the compiler, Sri Haridas Das, is sufficient guarantee for thoroughness and accuracy.”<sup>22</sup> It is believed that Chaṭṭopādhyāya was so affectionate of his erstwhile student’s scholarship, that he once expressed his desire to be initiated by Haridāsajī. Haridāsajī politely declined; indeed, it is to be noted that Haridāsajī did not make a single disciple in his lifetime. He was so humble that he never offered public discourses, lectures, *pravacana*, and he steered clear of any seminars or conferences—he never spoke about himself at all. That is why he is so little-known today and most of his publications are currently out of print.

Unfortunately, Haridāsajī did not see his complete *abhidhāna* in print. After checking the last proofs for the second volume, he announced, “The *abhidhāna* is finished, so Haridāsa is also finished.” He passed away just days after that. Both the Central and State Governments allotted funds and the West Bengal Govt. appointed a committee under whose supervision several volunteers worked to bring out the volume posthumously. But in his lifetime, Haridāsa never had the opportunity of being aided by any student or disciples or being assisted by anyone in the task of restoration, translation, compilation, editing, publishing, and so on.

Haridāsajī is remembered today through his works, though unfortunately not as widely as he should be. His works had not only been instrumental in reestablishing the lost glory of Caitanya Mahāprabhu and his *sampradāya*, but have become indispensable for any thorough research and study conducted in these fields.

The extreme selfless service of a simple man of great intellectual caliber, who lived meagerly, who continuously worked to give back to his society and community but never expected anything in return, is awe-inspiring. He was truly *jñānāgnidagdha karmāṇarī*, one whose works are burned up in the fire of wisdom. Interestingly, Haridāsa Dāsa had never ever used a pair of shoes or slippers, conducting all his work and field research with bare feet. This bare-foot image looks at us as if from a lost world of ideal Vaiṣṇavas, selfless scholars and towering intellectuals with devotional hearts; this image has to be retrieved, the traditions tells us, for our own good.

### Acknowledgements

The Bhaktivedanta Research Centre, Kolkata, is presently hosting *The Vaishnava Encyclopaedia Project*. Here, researchers are engaged in translating *The Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava Abhidhāna* by Haridāsa Dāsa under the editorial supervision of Abhishek Bose. The plan is to publish an annotated English translation of the book, volume by volume.

### Endnotes

1. *Bhagavadgītā*, 4.19, English translation by Radhakrishnan. 1963 (1948). London: George Allen and Unwin. The translation adds these words to further explain the verse: “Such a worker has the universality of outlook born of wisdom (*jñāna*) and freedom from selfish desire. Though he works, he really does nothing.”

2. Bābājī is a conjugation of Bābā (lit. father) and the honorific jī added to one’s name in addressing. In the present context, Bābājī means an order of Vaisnava renunciates akin to that of *sannyāsa* with some differences. For instance, a Bābājī would not reject *śikhā-sutra* or adopt *daṇḍa* and *kamaṇḍalu* like a *sannyāsī* would. They are not part of the *daśanāmī* order instituted by Ādi Śankarācārya.

3. ‘*Śraddhānjali o nivedana/haridāsa dāsajīr sanikṣipta jīvanī*’, in *Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava Abhidhāna*, vol. II, compiled and edited by Haridāsa Dāsa, Nabadvīpa: Haribola Kuṭīra, published posthumously in 1956. Unless otherwise mentioned, the following is based largely on this account and also, Datta, Sureścandra. “*Śraddhānjali*.” Rāya, Mihirkumāra. Ed. 1998. *Vaiṣṇavācārya śrī haridāsa dāsa smaraṇikā*, Calcutta: Sanskrit Pustak Bhandar.

4. *Pūrvāśrama* means the stage before *Sannyāsa*, e.g. the *Gārhasthya Āśrama*, the householder stage before entering *Sannyāsa Āśrama*. *Āśrama* means the four stages of life – *Brahmacarya*, *Gārhastha*, *Vānaprastha* and *Sannyāsa*.

5. *Mādhukarī* originates from the word *madhukara* which means the honey-bee who wanders from place to place and collects honey. Likewise, an ideal *Vaiṣṇava* goes from door to door chanting the holy name and seeking alms everyday for his subsistence.

6. Gangopādhyāya, Sukhendusundara. “*Śatavarṣera āloya vaiṣṇava ācārya śrīla haridāsa dāsa bābājī*”, Rāya, Mihirkumāra. Ed. 1998. *Vaiṣṇavācārya śrī haridāsa dāsa smaraṇikā*. Calcutta: Sanskrit Pustak Bhandar.

7. Present-day Vrindavan is known as a *dhāma*, which means a sacred place or a place of pilgrimage.

8. A feeling of intense apathy towards worldly life.

9. Cakravartī, Dhyāneśanārāyaṇa. “*Vange vaiṣṇava sādhanāra bhagīratha haridāsa dāsa*”, Rāya, Mihirkumāra. Ed. 1998. *Vaiṣṇavācārya śrī haridāsa dāsa smaraṇikā*, Calcutta: Sanskrit Pustak Bhandar. The above section is based on this article.

10. Literal garb; here meaning *kaupīna* or ritual loincloth and *bahirbāsa* or outer garment i.e. a piece of unstitched cloth.

11. *Seva* might mean duty, service, devotion, love, fulfilling others’ wishes, among other things. Here we are translating it as loving service or service.

12. In one sense, *siddhi* means to acquire supernatural powers through austere penances as in *aṣṭa* (eight)-*siddhi* namely, *aṇimā*, *laghimā*, *garimā*, *prāpti*, *mahimā*, *iśitva*, *vaśitva*. However, these eight are not regarded highly in the vaiṣṇava context; here *siddhi* means attaining a stage of *prema-bhakti* where the devotee gets admitted into the *kuṇja* and can witness the intimate pastimes of Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa. This is the highest goal of any Vaiṣṇava. One who has attained *siddhi* is called a *siddha*.

13. Haridāsa Dāsa as quoted in Datta, Sureścandra. 'Śraddhāṅjali.' Ibid.

14. Dāsa, Haridāsa, 'Avataraṇika', *Gauḍiya Vaiṣṇava Abhidhāna*, vol. I, compiled and edited by Haridāsa Dāsa, Nabadvīpa: Haribola Kuṭīra, 1956.

15. Cakravartī, Ramākānta. 'Gauḍiya vaiṣṇava dharma aitiḥāsika haridāsa dāsa'. Rāya, Mihirkumāra. Ed. 1998. 1998. *Vaiṣṇavācārya śrī haridāsa dāsa smaraṇikā*, Calcutta: Sanskrit Pustak Bhandar.

16. Śrīpāṭa: A holy place connected to a Vaiṣṇava, a residence, āśrama etc.

17. Cakravartī, Ramākānta. 'Gauḍiya vaiṣṇava dharma aitiḥāsika haridāsa dāsa'.

18. Giri, Satyavati. "Śrī haridāsa dāsa śrīpāṭa paryāṭana." Rāya, Mihirkumāra. Ed. 1998. *Vaiṣṇavācārya śrī haridāsa dāsa smaraṇikā*, Calcutta: Sanskrit Pustak Bhandar.

19. Cakravartī, Ramākānta. Ibid.

20. *Koṣa* in Sanskrit means collections, dictionaries, treasuries. The *koṣas* were originally lexicographical works in Sanskrit literature. Another generic term closer to this was the *nighaṇṭu* that referred to collection of words grouped into thematic categories. The western categories of Glossary, Thesaurus and others are often considered comparable with these.

21. In this context, the *Viśvakoṣa* compiled by Nagandranātha Basu in 24 volumes must be remembered as the single-most encyclopaedic work which, according to some, was comparable to the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* in standards. There were also the *caritakoṣas*, *jātiya sāhityera itiḥāsa*, *bāṅgālira itiḥāsa*, *bhārater itiḥāsa* written during this time in Bengal and in other parts of India.

22. Gangopādhyāya, Sukhendusundara. 'Śatavarṣera āloya vaiṣṇava ācārya śrīla haridāsa dāsa bābājī' in Rāya, Mihirkumāra. Ed. 1998. *Vaiṣṇavācārya śrī haridāsa dāsa smaraṇikā*, Calcutta: Sanskrit Pustak Bhandar.